

Peter, Jesus and Me: Misunderstanding

Pastor Matthew Ude

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John 18:1-11 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. ² And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. ³ Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. ⁴ Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" ⁵ They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. ⁶ Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," ⁹ that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Back in 1999 "NASA lost its \$125-million Mars Climate Orbiter because spacecraft engineers failed to convert from English to metric measurements"

From <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-oct-01-mn-17288-story.html>>

Misunderstandings happen all the time. They don't usually cost us \$125 million dollars but they do often cause big problems.

Taking the time to check if the measurements are metric or standard could have saved the government hundreds of millions of dollars. Taking the time to ask your spouse, family or friend, "why did you say that" will often reveal they didn't at all mean it the way you heard it. Such a simple thing can save you a lot of anger and resentment.

Taking the time to remember that Christ went to the cross for you will often result in the recognition that despite current circumstances God does love you and is on your side.

In our text Peter misunderstands. He fails to understand what God's plan is. He fails to understand that God is in control. Above all he fails to understand that Jesus' love is deep enough to willingly go to the cross. Because he fails to understand he acts contrary to God's will.

Peter fails and we fail, often simply because we misunderstand what God is doing in our lives.

God's love does not fail. Jesus' love is great enough to go to the cross for Peter and for you. Jesus' love is great enough to make sure the disciples and you are free to "go their way."

How does Peter so badly misjudge the situation?

In 1999 when NASA lost the Mars Climate Orbiter it wasn't a onetime mistake. For nine months Lockheed had been using English standard units while JPL had been using metric. Nine months this went on without anyone apparently noticing.

The signs were there for Peter as well. He should have known better. Jesus had told Peter that the "son of man must die and rise again." Peter should have known this was God's plan.

Earlier when the people of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus off the cliff, he simply walked right through the midst of them. Peter should have known that God was perfectly in control.

Even in our text Jesus speaks and all the soldiers fall to the ground. There was the clear sign that Jesus could have walked away without a problem. The proof was right there that when Jesus went with the guards He went willingly. Peter should have known that Christ willingly went to the cross.

Peter was so focused on the way things looked in that moment, that he either forgot or disregarded all the things that he should have known about Jesus.

We are no better than Peter. We get focused on the moment in front of us and the way things look from an earthly perspective, and we forget. We forget that it is Christ who died and rose again from the dead, who sits on the right hand of God the Father. We forget that God did not withhold even His own Son from us.

How do we misunderstand God's plans?

This last Sunday your Gospel reading may have been the account of the man born blind. There is another case where everyone misunderstood God's plan. The pharisees, the disciples, even the man who was blind, they all misunderstood.

This man had spent his whole life being told, "You are blind because you are a sinner. You are under God's curse. God has rejected you."

Then here comes Jesus and Jesus says, "No." God isn't picking on this man. God has turned his back on him. Rather God has specially chosen him as a vessel through whom the glory of God will break forth upon the earth.

The man born blind is filled with joy. He is overjoyed to see again. He is also overjoyed to know that God doesn't hate him. Through Jesus he finally understands. Rather than being under the wrath of God, he was specially chosen by God.

We do the same thing. We forget what Jesus told his disciples about this blind man. Bad things happen to us, and we often think. "God is punishing me." It's not hard for us to think up reasons why God might be punishing us. We know our sin. It's easy for us to remember some sin that God might be punishing us for.

We think, "Why is God picking on me? Why me God? it's not fair."

We think, "Why isn't God answering my prayer? Has God abandoned me?"

Peter should have known better. Jesus had clearly told him on multiple occasions and the proof was right there. We should know better too. How many times has God told us He is not going to punish us for our sins. Jesus took that punishment upon himself. Yet in the moment we often forget.

The greatest heroes of faith were not those who went out and slew giants but those who simply accepted suffering, trusting that it was God's will. They like Jesus accepted the way of the cross. People like Daniel, Joseph, and David. Sure, David slew Goliath but the faith it took to kill Goliath was not as great as the faith it took not to kill king Saul when he had him at his mercy in the cave.

David had learned a lesson that Peter in our text had not. Sometimes we must be ready to draw our swords for Christ, but more often we have to be ready to sheath them. Sheathing our swords takes greater faith. Sheathing our swords and trusting that God has everything under control. Peter's faith was great enough to fight God's enemies, but it was not great enough to accept the cross.

We've been going through the book of Daniel in bible class and just this last Sunday we talked about Daniel chapter eight. In Daniel chapter eight, you have the vision of the ram and the goat. The ram represents the Persian empire, and the goat represents the Greek empire. The goat begins with one horn representing Alexander the Great. The one horn is replaced with four horns representing the Diadochi, the four generals that split up Alexander's empire after he died.

While discussing this vision one of the members asked the most important question.

"Why? What is the point of these visions?"

When you study Daniel chapter eight the point of the vision is this little horn that comes up on the head of the goat. This little horn in Daniel eight is symbolizing a man name Antiochus IV Epiphanes. There is another little horn in other parts of Daniel which is someone different but in chapter eight this is Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Now how many of you have heard of Antiochus IV Epiphanes?

God is skipping over Cyrus, Aertexes, the battle of Thermopylae, Alexander the Great, and Alexander's generals. They are all there, but they are background. All these major historic events are background. What God really cares about is warning his people about Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus is a man who would do unspeakably cruel things to the people of God.

When he did these things, God's people were bound to misunderstand just like Peter. If we were there we would too. It looked like God has abandoned His people, but God warned them ahead of time. So that when it happened those who had ears to hear would know the truth that God has not abandoned His people.

This is the point of those visions. God doesn't care about Alexander the great, or the battle of Thermopylae. He cares about His people. He wants to make sure we do not misunderstand. When bad things happen it does not mean that He is punishing us. It does not mean that He has lost control. It does not mean that He has abandoned us.

The truth is evident in our text. Jesus willingly went to the cross, and as He is going to the cross what does he say? "Let these all go."

We are free to go because Jesus went to the cross for us. We are free from the guilt of sin because Jesus carried our sins. We are free from the fear of death because Jesus died in our place.

We do not always know why people are born blind, or men like Antiochus are allowed to terrorize even God's faithful people. We do know that it is not the condemnation of the law. Do not misunderstand God's love has not abandoned you no matter what it may look like.

Romans 8:31-39 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.